

## CONTAINS CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS INFORMATION NOT SUBJECT TO DISCLOSURE UNDER FOIA

March 5, 2021

#### By Electronic Mail

Thomas Carroll
Acting Director
Air Enforcement Division
Office of Civil Enforcement
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
William Jefferson Clinton Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Mail Code: 2201A
Washington, DC 20460

Re: March Update to Response to April 24, 2020 Letter from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

#### Dear Mr. Carroll:

Birla Carbon USA, Inc. ("Birla" or the "Company") submits this letter as the tenth update to its May 22, 2020 response to the April 24, 2020 letter it received from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA" or the "Agency") regarding force majeure notices the Company submitted on March 16 and 18, 2020 in anticipated noncompliance with obligations under the Consent Decree between the United States of America, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality ("LDEQ"), the Kansas Department of Health and Environment ("KDHE"), and Columbian Chemicals Company. Consent Decree, *United States et al. v. Columbian Chem. Co.*, No. 6:17-cv-01661-RGJ-CBW (W.D. La. June 11, 2018).

Please note that this letter and certain attachments to this letter include confidential business information ("CBI") and are marked as such. Documents marked for CBI are entitled to confidential treatment under 40 C.F.R. Part 2, Subpart B, and are not subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"), 5 U.S.C. § 552. We ask that LDEQ and KDHE similarly treat this as CBI under their analogous state laws.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Certain attachments to this letter include CBI, which Birla has designated as such with the stamp "CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS INFORMATION NOT SUBJECT TO DISCLOSURE UNDER FOIA." Based on a review of relevant LDEQ regulations, La. Admin. Code tit. 33, pt. I, § 501(A), Birla understands that it must submit any CBI via mail or delivery to Birla Carbon USA, Inc.

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#### I. North Bend

Since our last update, construction was ongoing at North Bend for installation of equipment required under the Consent Decree.

Birla's vendor, estimates a two to four month delay for various components of the scrubber system due to lack of access to manufacturing facilities in connection with poor weather conditions and COVID-19 restrictions. *See* Confidential Attachments 1, 2, and 3.

The heat recovery steam generation ("HRSG") boiler was delayed nearly two months from the original delivery date. *See* Confidential Attachment 1. Delivery was made on March 4, 2021, and the equipment is currently being moved into place.

Last week, notified Birla that due to the death of its company principal and COVID-19 related issues, it would not be able to complete its contract and deliver the due for delivery on April 1, 2021. *See* Confidential Attachment 1. Birla is in the process of sourcing these items from another vendor. Impact on the project, if any, is not yet known.

Overall delays are still estimated at just over seven weeks from the originally scheduled target completion date, with a projected completion date of November 22, 2021. See Confidential Attachment 1. The final commissioning is anticipated to take place following that date, with the CEMS being certified on December 10, 2021 after all system tuning is done.

#### II. Hickok

Construction is ongoing at Hickok for installation of equipment required under the Consent Decree. On February 24, 2021, the RATA Test was submitted to KDHE. The Company is continuing with commissioning work on the new system, but Birla is still waiting on the KDHE air permit modification that covers all new equipment.

The reactor vent scrubbers have been dispatched from India and are currently in Taiwan, awaiting transfer to the ship which will bring them to Oakland, California. Arrival in Oakland is currently anticipated on March 29, 2021. Birla expects arrival in Denver to clear U.S. Customs and Border Protection approximately one week later. The reactor vent scrubbers will then be transferred to the Hickok site for installation. Installation and commissioning is expected to take approximately one month once the unit is delivered on site. Birla expects the reactor vent scrubbers to be installed and operational by April 23, 2021.

As discussed in Confidential Attachment 4 and Attachment 5, during commissioning operations on Incinerator Train #1, on February 8, 2021, it was discovered that the primary boiler feed water pump had failed. Investigation showed that shortly thereafter, the second pump also failed. During this time, hot gases from the incinerator continued to flow to and through the HRSG even though there was no water flow. This resulted in significant damage to the HRSG. While the root cause analysis is on-going, it

LDEQ and not electronically. At this time, Birla is providing the entire submittal to EPA and KDHE, and will separately submit the letter and its attachments to LDEQ.

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appears that a safety interlock, which should have shut down the hot gas flow to the HRSG, did not function correctly. The boiler manufacturer and the EPC Contractor have developed a path forward to return the boiler to being fully operational since it cannot be operated in the current state. This will include replacing a portion of the boiler tubes and making other repairs. This boiler produces steam which is essential for plant steam and freeze protection. The boiler supplier will mobilize on March 10, 2021, and begin working on preparatory work to replace some tubes. It should be noted that the replacement tubes being manufactured in Texas were affected by recent severe weather events in that state. Commissioning work on the project will resume once the boiler is retubed. Birla estimates that these boiler issues will be resolved by April 9, 2021.<sup>2</sup>

Assuming there are no further delays, Birla anticipates Hickok meeting Consent Decree obligations by April 23, 2021.

We will update you with more details as they become available. Please contact David Buente at 202-255-8684 or <a href="mailto:dbuente@sidley.com">dbuente@sidley.com</a> if you have any questions in the meantime.

Sincerely,

Randy Waskul

Rondyd Wardel

Global Director, Health, Safety & Environmental

CC: Kellie Ortega, U.S. EPA (by email)

Patrick Foley, U.S. EPA (by email)

Chris Williams, U.S. EPA (by email)

Carlos Evans, U.S. EPA Region 6 (by email)

Emad Shahin, U.S. EPA Region 6 (by email)

Lisa Gotto, U.S. EPA Region 7 (by email)

Lisa Hanlon, U.S. EPA Region 7 (by email)

Amy Algoe-Eakin, U.S. EPA Region 7 (by email)

Alex Chen, U.S. EPA Region 7 (by email)

Thomas Mariani, U.S. DOJ (by email)

Eli Quinn, U.S. DOJ (by email)

Connie Ellis, KDHE (by email)

Kate Gleeson, KDHE (by email)

Deidre Johnson, LDEQ (by FedEx)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> We assume this satisfies our notification requirements under Paragraph 56, which requires Birla to notify the Agencies of anything that could potentially cause a violation of the Consent Decree. Please let us know if further details or additional notification is required.

David Buente, Sidley Austin LLP (by email) Peter Whitfield, Sidley Austin LLP (by email)

Enclosures: Confidential Attachment 1 - 2021-03-01 - North Bend - Letter from Engineer of Record

Confidential Attachment 2 - 2021-03-02 - North Bend - Letter from Scrubber System Vendor

Confidential Attachment 3 - 2021-03-03 - North Bend - Letter from Scrubber System Vendor

Confidential Attachment 4 - 2021-03-03 - Hickok - Worley COVID-19 Impact Schedule Analysis

Attachment 5 - 2021-03-03 - Hickok - Letter from Worley

## **CONFIDENTIAL ATTACHMENT 1**

2021-03-01 - North Bend -Letter from Engineer of Record Attn: Mark B. Vannice, PE, Project Director Birla Carbon USA, Inc. Regional Office Marietta 1800 West Oak Commons Ct Marietta, GA 30062

Letter: BC-011

Re: Purchase Order No. 2300002188; Notice of Force Majeure Event Update - Status as of

March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021

Dear Mr. Vannice:

Reference is made the above Purchase Order and the Professional Services Terms and Conditions (Agreement) and Letters BC-001 dated May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and BC-002 dated June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Terms not otherwise defined herein shall have the meaning assigned to them in the Agreement.

In accordance with Article 12(a) of the Agreement Engineer is providing Owner an update to the Force Majeure Event notice of May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The Force Majeure Event is primarily the domino effect of uncontrolled delays and disruption of the global supply chain the Owner is experiencing from its Vendors supplying material and equipment to the Facility project; and secondarily the potential delay caused by disruptions in the available services to, and mobility of, Engineers' staff. The delays and disruptions to the supply chain as we are informed by notices from the Vendors to you are caused by impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic on the manufacture of materials and equipment. These delays are outside the control and without the fault of Engineer. To the extent these delays experienced by the Vendors affects the timely delivery of our Work that depends on inputs of information and ultimately delivery to the Facility in accordance with the Schedule, we are, or likely will be, seeking extensions on the Schedule for a time reasonably necessary to overcome the effect of the delay and additional compensation as appropriate. We are to the extent possible undertaking reasonable measures to make up for time lost caused by the delay and assisting Owner, to the extent possible, mitigating Vendor impacts.



March 1st, 2021 Mr. Mark Vannice Page 2

As of March 1<sup>st</sup>, we are informed by Owner's Vendor that they are incurring delays of anywhere from two (2) to four (4) months for various components of the AQCS due to the lack of access to manufacturing facilities in connection with the restrictions related to the COVID-19 virus. In addition, Owner's Vendor delayed their hydrotest dates until January 18th and 29th, 2021, causing a delay of the delivery of the HRSG until March 4th. This is over two months past the original delivery date. On February 26th, Owner's Vendor notified Birla and the project that they would not be able to complete their contract and deliver the which was due to deliver April 1st, 2021. The reason given by was twofold: death of the company principal and Covid -19 impacts. began immediately to source another supplier, but the total impact of this on the project is not yet known. Additionally, the entire North Bend plant was evacuated the week of August 24th, 2020 due to two named storms, Hurricane Laura and Tropical Storm Marco. Also, the entire North Bend facility was evacuated again October 8th - 11th, 2020 for Hurricane Delta. This evacuation had initially delayed the piling contractor and they had issued a Force Majeure notice for this event. The piling is now complete and this has been incorporated into the current schedule. These potential delays by the Vendors and the evacuation of the site the week of August 24th and again in October translates to a corresponding delay affecting the Engineer's Schedule that is also outside the control and without fault of Engineer. Engineer is taking every effort to overcome or mitigate the potential delays and will keep you informed as further information becomes available, so that we can work together cooperatively to

After incorporating all the known FM delays and impacts into the project schedule, the completion date for the project is currently November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021. This is a total delay of just over 7 weeks from the original schedule target date of October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. The delay has not been incorporated into the schedule since the total impact is not yet known.

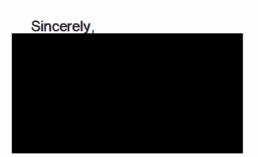
We continue to monitor the situation and will keep the Owner apprised of additional delays when they are discovered.

Please feel free to contact me at	if a second of the second of t	you
have any questions.		

address any problems that may arise on your Facility project.



March 1st, 2021 Mr. Mark Vannice Page 3





cc: Randy Waskul, Birla Nick Johnson, SLCI David Lund, SLCI

## **CONFIDENTIAL ATTACHMENT 2**

2021-03-02 - North Bend -Letter from Scrubber System Vendor



Date: March 2, 2021



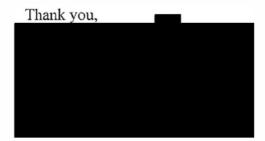
Transmitted by email via Transmittal T0014

Re: Notice of schedule impact related to the abnormal weather conditions on February 13 through February 21, 2021 in Exacerbating the schedule impact of the weather event has been the ongoing impact of COVID-19 related absences, on Order Number 5000068766 Birla Carbon Upgrade (the "Project").

Mark Van Den Hende,

This letter is regarding the abnormal weather conditions stated above and its impact on Order Number 5000068766 Birla Carbon Upgrade (the "Project"). was forced to shut down operations completely at both the plants starting on February 13<sup>th</sup> and were unable to resume operations until February 22<sup>nd</sup>. The 9-day closure was exacerbated by employees with COVID-19 related symptoms being unable to seek diagnosis during this period increasing the number of typical absences once operations were able to resume. In addition to the COVID-19 related absences, some employees were unable to immediately return to work on the 22<sup>nd</sup> due to personal damage related to the weather event. In full, the abnormal weather event coupled with the COVID-19 impact created a 2-week schedule delay on the Project.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with official notice of an impact to projected fabrication and delivery schedule on the Project as a result of the abnormal weather conditions which were exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This notice is intended to comply with any relevant notice requirements whether applicable by contract, statute, regulation, caselaw, or other authority.



## **CONFIDENTIAL ATTACHMENT 3**

2021-03-03 - North Bend -Letter from Scrubber System Vendor

March 3, 2021 Birla Carbon U.S.A., Inc. Attn.: Mark Vannice 1800 West Oak Commons Ct Marietta, Georgia 30062 Email: mark.vannice@adityabirla.com Re: Seawater Flue Gas Desulfurization System/ Birla Carbon - North Bend Facility, Centerville, Louisiana PO Number: 2300002283 Notice of Force Majeure Event Dear Mr. Vannice, Further to our conversation this morning, attached please find a notice of an adverse Force Majeure impact The adverse impact is due to COVID-19 absences and the recent abnormal weather event resulting in an unforeseen schedule delay for a fabrication and delivery by approximately two weeks. informed as further information becomes available. Additionally, please know that we are actively monitoring other suppliers as we understand that delays due to port congestion connected with staffing shortages and administrative requirements arising out of COVID-19 remain possible. We are experiencing COVID-19 related delays in transportation of materials on other projects originating in Asia. We will keep you apprised should such delays affecting Birla Carbon be reported. Please feel free to contact me at if you have any questions. Sincerely, CC Owner's Representative:

## **CONFIDENTIAL ATTACHMENT 4**

2021-03-03 - Hickok -Worley COVID-19 Impact Schedule Analysis



# Hickok Air Quality Control Upgrade Project

**COVID-19 Impact Schedule Analysis** 

Prepared for Birla Carbon USA March 03, 2021



**Eco**Nomics

## Purpose: To identify the effects of the COVID-19 Global Pandemic Force Majeure event on the Birla Carbon Hickok Project.

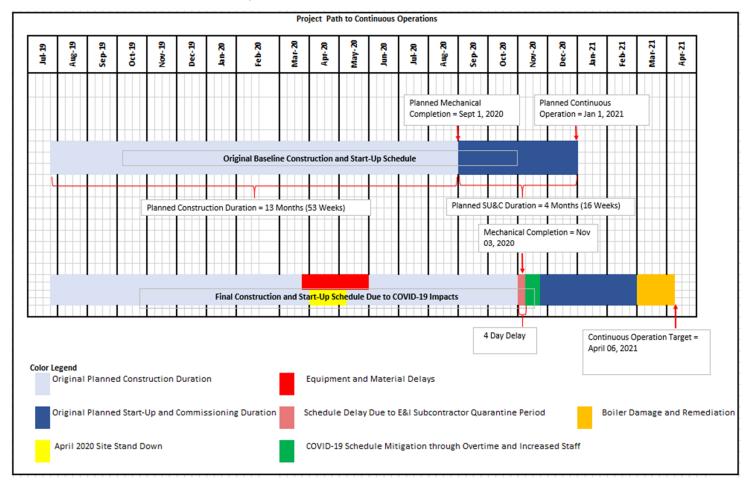
- Project was initially planned to achieve the Compliance Date of 01/01/2021.
- COVID-19 Global Pandemic directly delayed delivery of equipment and material with a direct negative impact on schedule critical path.
- Subsequently the COVID-19 Global Pandemic caused other schedule delays on the project.
- There were no Covid-19 related schedule impacts experienced during February 2021.
- The project's new Waste Heat Recovery Boiler was damaged during equipment start-up in the month of February 2021. Boiler remediation work is scheduled to be performed in March 2021 which is extending the completion date beyond prior months' reporting.
- The project is currently forecasting a target compliance date of 06 April 2021.

#### Project was logically sequenced to install:

- Perform earthworks/foundations
- Install Equipment
- Install Steel Racks
- Erect Piping
- Install Electrical
- Mechanical Completion
- Commissioning
- Compliance Date
- COVID-19 Global Pandemic directly delayed delivery of critical equipment/material during the equipment installation period and at the start of the bulk pipe installation period.
- Vendors began to notify Worley of known delays in March 2020
- The equipment and material delays caused a 45 day delay to the project construction schedule



# Schedule Impact Overview





# Material and Equipment Delays

	Pre-Covid	Post-Covid	Actual Delivery		
	DD: March 27, 2020	DD: May 08, 2020	DD: Nov 13, 2020		
Activity Name	Finish Date	Finish Date	Finish Date	Variance from Baseline	Craft
Ductwork (Combustion Air)	17-Apr-20	5-May-20	May 5, 2020	18	Boiler Makers
Misc. Loose Ship Items	17-Apr-20	19-May-20	May 22, 2020	35	Boiler Makers
Ductwork (Tail Gas)	17-Apr-20	21-May-20	May 26, 2020	39	Boiler Makers
Pipe Skids	10-Apr-20	18-May-20	May 22, 2020	42	Boiler Makers
Pilot Air Line	17-Apr-20	21-May-20	June 1, 2020	45	Boiler Makers
Ductwork (Boiler)	17-Apr-20	21-May-20	June 1, 2020	45	Boiler Makers
Ductwork	17-Apr-20	8-May-20	June 1, 2020	45	Boiler Makers
Expansion Joints	17-Apr-20	27-May-20	June 4, 2020	48	Boiler Makers
DELIVERY: WORLEY - Pipe Supports (Atomizer Cooling Air Piping)	27-Apr-20	18-May-20	May 13, 2020	16	Piping
DELIVERY: WORLEY - Damper Valves	19-Jun-20	24-Jun-20	July 8, 2020	19	Piping
DELIVERY: WORLEY - PCV Valve	19-Jun-20	24-Jun-20	July 8, 2020	19	Piping
DELIVERY: WORLEY - Pipe Supports (Duct)	15-Apr-20	15-May-20	May 13, 2020	28	Piping
DELIVERY: WORLEY - Pipe Supports Del. Complete (Small & Large Bore Piping)	20-Apr-20	15-May-20	May 20, 2020	30	Piping

<sup>\*</sup>Critical path activities (Less than 5 days Schedule Float) highlighted in yellow



# **Equipment Supplier Delay Notifications**

Item	Supplier/Location	Supplier COVID-19 Impact Notification Date	Original Planned Delivery Date	COVID-19 Delayed Delivery Date (Actual)
Fuel Skids		March 20, 2020	April 10, 2020	Arrived at site on May 26, 2020
BMS Panels		March 20, 2020	March 23, 2020	Shipped to downstream integrator on April 23, 2020.  Arrived at site with PDC in late June 2020.
36" Pressure Control Valve		March 18, 2020	June 16, 2020	Valves and air tanks arrived at site on July 08, 2020
36" On/Off Dampers		March 18, 2020	June 16, 2020	Valves and air tanks arrived at site on July 08, 2020
Flow Elements / Dampers / Control Valves / Incinerator Mounted Instrumentation		March 20, 2020	April 17, 2020	Arrived at site on May 22, 2020

# Material Supplier Delay Notifications

Item	Supplier/Location	Supplier COVID-19 Impact Notification Date	Original Planned Delivery Date	COVID-19 Delayed Delivery Date (Actual)
Pipe Supports and Hangers		March 30, 2020	April 20, 2020	All supports received on site by May 20, 2020
Combustion Air Ductwork		March 20, 2020	April 17, 2020	All received on site May 4, 2020.
Tail Gas Ductwork		March 20, 2020	April 17, 2020	Delivered to site on June 01, 2020
WHRU (Boiler) Inlet Ductwork		March 20, 2020	April 17, 2020	Delivered to site on June 01, 2020



# Analysis of Construction Schedule Delay Due to COVID-19 HSE Work Restrictions

	Pre-Covid-19 Schedule				Actualized Schedule with Current Progress				
Activity Description	Duration (Days)	Start Date	Finish Date	Duration (Days)	Duration (Days) Less Site Stand Down	Duration Variance from Baseline	Start Date	Finish Date	
	Schedule Data Da	te: March 27, 20	20	Schedule Data Da	te: November 13, 2	020			
Utility Bridge					·				
Ductwork	28	May 28, 2020	July 7, 2020	48	48	20	May 7, 2020	September 10, 2020	
Electrical	33	May 26, 2020	July 10, 2020	70	70	37	June 25, 2020	October 8, 2020	
Piping	26	April 21, 2020	May 27, 2020	45	45	19	May 4, 2020	July 2, 2020	
Incinerator Train North									
Ductwork	40	March 18, 2020	May 21, 2020	80	55	15	March 18, 2020	August 26, 2020	
Electrical	58	May 26, 2020	August 14, 2020	92	92	34	June 5, 2020	October 15, 2020	
Piping	21	June 10, 2020	July 13, 2020	39	39	18	June 4, 2020	July 24, 2020	
Incinerator Train South									
Ductwork	37	April 13, 2020	June 3, 2020	58	58	21	May 5, 2020	August 7, 2020	
Electrical	58	May 26, 2020	August 14, 2020	90	90	32	June 5, 2020	October 7, 2020	
Piping	20	June 25, 2020	July 23, 2020	20	20	0	July 10, 2020	August 3, 2020	
ID Fan & Boiler Loop									
Ductwork	10	May 26, 2020	June 8, 2020	55	55	45	June 18, 2020	September 14, 2020	
Electrical	60	May 26, 2020	August 18, 2020	75	75	15	August 5, 2020	November 17, 2020	
Piping	32	June 5, 2020	July 22, 2020	58	58	26	June 8, 2020	August 27, 2020	

Extended durations demonstrate inherent impact of COVID Compliant Work Restrictions



# Analysis of Construction Schedule Delay Due to COVID-19 HSE Work Restrictions (Cont)

Construction Subcontractor ( ) analysis of schedule duration impact due to new COVID-19 Compliant Work Rules

#### 3.4 Impacted Schedule- Project Shutdown and Area Resource Leveling

Figure 3 represents the summary of impact to the March 27th data date schedule with the project shut down dates established in the schedule as well as resource leveling the schedule with maximum numbers of trades on the project site and area resource leveling. These two impact items result in a 10/30/2020 Mechanical Completion Date, an impact of (25) workdays due to project shut down and (18) workdays due to resource leveling and total of a (43) workday delay. Resource leveling now has a greater impact due to concurrent activities needing manpower in similar areas. With the limitations of manpower in these areas, activities had to be prioritized and some areas resulted in delays to the schedule.

This impact also represents the actual impact to the project and what had been presented since May 13th, 2020 as the resource leveled schedule DD 08-May-20 post project shutdown. Mechanical Completion was represented as 10/30/2020. The project has continued since that point and was reestablished as the requested Mechanical Completion Date in Correspondence 19037-ACI-WP-007\_Mechanical Completion Schedule Relief dated 08/04/2020. The attached Birla Carbon EPC\_Leveled Schedule\_DD 08-May-20 schedule layout represents the project's schedule upon return to work.

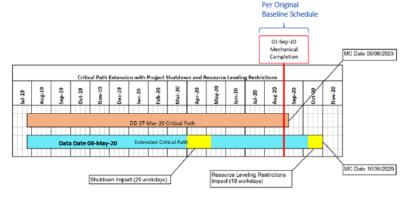
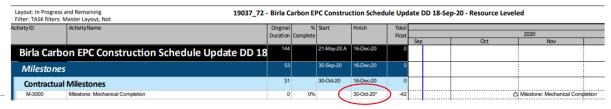


Figure 3 Summary Bar Chart Project Shutdown and Area Resource Leveling Restrictions





Expected Mechanical Completion <u>as of September 25, 2020 (Reflects planned additional manpower scheduled to help mitigate effect of 14 Day Quarantine of E&I Subcontractor)</u>

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Filter: TASK filters: Master Layout, Not

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ActivityName

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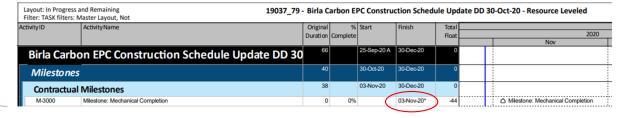
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Expected Mechanical Completion <u>as of October 30, 2020</u> (Reflects additional Sunday Overtime scheduled to further help mitigate 14 Day Quarantine of E&I Subcontractor)





3

# Summary

	Pre COVID-19 Baseline	COVID-19 Impact
Relative Data Date	27-Mar-20	27-Mar-20
March 27, 2020 Construction Duration to Complete (Days)	158	158
Material and Equipment Delay Impact	0	45
COVID-19 HSE Site Work Restrictions	0	18
COVID-19 Quarantine of E&I Subcontractor Delay Impact	0	14
Positive COVID-19 Mitigation Efforts	0	-14
Mechanical Completion	1-Sep-20	3-Nov-20
Commissioning Duration (Days)	122	122
Current Foreseen Commissioning Duration Improvement		
(Days)	0	0
Unplanned Equipment Damage Remediation	0	32
Continuous Operation	1-Jan-21	6-Apr-21



## **ATTACHMENT 5**

2021-03-03 - Hickok - Letter from Worley



2675 Morgantown Road Reading PA 19607 USA

Telephone: +1 610 855 2000 worleyparsons.com

HAQCU-00-PM-TRE-0089

03 Mar 2021

Mark Vannice, Birla Carbon Project Director Birla Carbon USA, Inc 1800 West Oak Commons Ct Marietta, Georgia 30062

Re: HAQCU – Waste Heat Recovery Boiler Force Majeure Consideration

Dear Mr. Vannice,

While we continue to assess the events surrounding the boiler damage incident, and undertake a root cause analysis, it appears that aspects of the incident may be considered force majeure. While the full extent of such damage is still being assessed and may not be known until the boiler is repaired and tested, Worley is hereby notifying Birla Carbon of the potential for a force majeure claim, and reserves its rights under the EPC Contract to receive schedule and cost adjustment associated with the boiler damage incident.

Yours sincerely,

Scott Dawson

**HAQCU Project Manager** 

Hickok Air Quality Control Upgrade Project

CC: Dale Clarke, Birla Carbon Chief Manufacturing Officer

Trey Wills, Worley VP of Power Generation Robert Martin, Worley VP of Operations Timothy Evered, Worley Legal Counsel William Meyn, Worley Legal Counsel